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REVIEW OF THE EFFICIENCY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL FUNCTIONING OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Joint Inspection Unit

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with article 9, paragraph 2, of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly the work programme of the Unit for 1994 and the preliminary work programme for 1995 and beyond.

* A/49/50.

Annex

WORK PROGRAMME OF THE JOINT INSPECTION UNIT FOR 1994 AND PRELIMINARY WORK PROGRAMME FOR 1995 AND BEYOND

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The following work programme has been drawn up in accordance with article 9, paragraph 1, of the Statute of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), contained in the annex to General Assembly resolution 31/192 of 22 December 1976, and takes into account the guidelines laid out in Assembly resolutions 42/218 of 21 December 1987, 43/221 of 21 December 1988, 44/184 of 19 December 1989, 45/237 of 21 December 1990, decision 46/446 of 20 December 1991, resolution 47/201 of 22 December 1992 and resolution 48/221 of 23 December 1993. The work programme is divided into two sections: the first lists the Unit's work programme for 1994, and the second indicates those reports which the Unit contemplates undertaking after the current year. As hitherto, the work programme is subject to change in the course of the year: new reports may be added; planned reports may be modified, postponed or cancelled, when circumstances warrant; and titles may be changed to reflect the new thrust of report.

II. WORK PROGRAMME FOR 1994

A. Reports on management, budgetary and administrative issues

1. Assessment of accountability and oversight processes in the United Nations system

2. Many units throughout the United Nations system, most of which are quite small, are concerned with accountability for the use of resources entrusted to secretariats, as well as with internal and external oversight of programme implementation and management. There has been much new interest in the efficacy of such units, but a systematic assessment of their activities has never been made. JIU is surveying the many accountability and oversight processes and units in the United Nations system and will assess significant patterns, trends, successes, problems and promising new approaches. An interim report on this subject was issued during 1993 (A/48/420). The General Assembly, in resolution 48/218 of 23 December 1993, took note with appreciation of the report and decided to consider it further in the ongoing discussion of the improvement of oversight functions.

2. Inspection of the application of the United Nations recruitment, placement and promotion policies

3. Following serious critical remarks made in the Fifth Committee with regard to the Secretariat,s current recruitment, placement and promotion practices, the Unit was requested to prepare an inspection report on the application of the relevant policies. The report intends to address such issues as recruitment

during the current restructuring period, freeze on recruitment and its consequences, horizontal transfers, vertical transfers versus promotion, placement versus recruitment, as well as activities of recruitment and promotion bodies, and submit appropriate recommendations to improve the situation where necessary.

3. Performance appraisal and evaluation system in the the United Nations Secretariat

4. The General Assembly has repeatedly emphasized the need for sustained efforts to improve the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations. Resolution 48/218 of 23 December 1993, inter alia, called for "... the establishment of clear responsibility for programme delivery, including performance evaluation of all officials, including senior officials". In this report, JIU will survey some of the pertinent legislative directives and principles and indicators of performance review; it will investigate the present situation in the United Nations Secretariat and measures under way for improvement of the system, and in relation to attempts and examples outside the United Nations Secretariat. This will be carried out within the context of the broader purposes and principles as set out in the Charter of the United Nations and the Organization's mission and priority areas, as well as the standards of efficiency, competence and integrity of the staff. It will, therefore, look into ways of enhancing individual performance of staff members and the ability of the Organization and departments and units therein to plan, develop and utilize their human resources.

4. The status and advancement of women in the United Nations Secretariat: a new beginning?

5. As part of its comprehensive report on the advancement of women throughout all the programmes and organizations of the United Nations system (see preliminary work programme for 1995 and beyond, item 6), JIU decided to prepare a report on actions being taken to enhance the status and advancement of women in the United Nations Secretariat. This assessment focuses, in particular, on the current action programmes as part of new policies calling for much greater transparency, accountability and strategic management of human resources over all.

5. Communication for development programmes in the United Nations system

6. The contribution of effective communication - intended mainly as dissemination of information and involvement of beneficiaries - is widely considered as essential to the success of United Nations system development programmes. The importance of communication has also emerged more recently in peace-keeping operations and humanitarian assistance in conflict areas. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) - the principal organization mandated to be responsible for communication - being aware of this fact, has requested JIU to prepare a report on communication for

development programmes in the United Nations system. The report will investigate and evaluate the status of communication programmes of the United Nations agencies. The objective is to explore the possibility of improving inter-agency coordination of communication activities in development programmes, taking into account the existing informal arrangements.

6. Adjustment for staff turnover and delays in recruitment

7. Various organizations of the United Nations system would benefit from some harmonization through common terminology, as well as uniform standards, for the techniques used in calculating the budgetary adjustment for staff turnover and delays in recruitment (lapse-factor). The Administrative Committee on Coordination stated that those adjustments had become a matter of interest in the context of efforts to contain budget growth, but after having considered the issue it had come to the conclusion and agreed that organizational practices in respect of such adjustment varied depending on individual circumstances. The report aims at seeking the views of all organizations concerned, with the hope that a system-wide report on this subject would be instrumental in clarifying and, eventually, improving the present situation.

7. Sharing of common premises and services at the field level by United Nations system organizations

8. Recent General Assembly resolutions on operational activities for development contain explicit provisions requiring organizations of the United Nations system to achieve, as far as practicable, integrated field structures and services, without additional costs to the organizations and the developing countries. This report, which was requested by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in particular responds to General Assembly resolution 42/196 of 11 December 1987, in which the Assembly, in section IV, paragraph 24, invites "the governing bodies of organizations of the system to review and rationalize their field structure to enhance cooperation, coherence and efficiency through, inter alia, increased sharing of facilities and services". The report will review the progress already made in this area by United Nations bodies of the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (UNDP, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the World Food Programme) and assess the prospects and constraints for increased participation of the specialized agencies in common premises and services at the field level.

8. Evaluation of the regional presence of the Bureau for Development of Telecommunications of the International Telecommunication Union

9. At the request of the Council of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), JIU has accepted to evaluate the regional presence of the ITU Bureau for Development of Telecommunications, with a view to increasing its effectiveness and usefulness to developing countries.

9. Telecommunications and related information technologies in the United Nations system

10. Two reports on communication in the United Nations system were issued by JIU in 1972 and 1982. The need for updating these reports, initially requested by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), is clear from the tremendous progress in the field of telecommunications, both technically (through the spread of satellite technology) and operationally (through, for instance, deregulation and increased competition). Combined with legislative developments within the United Nations system, this has provided the whole United Nations system with new opportunities for effective telecommunications, one example being the proposed United Nations telecommunications network to cover the whole United Nations system. The report will provide an independent policy and management assessment of the various system-wide initiatives and alternative options, as these correspond to the realities of the field of telecommunications, in general, and the possibilities of cooperation within the United Nations system in particular.

10. An investigation into the management-Staff Union relationship in the United Nations system

11. The report will examine the objectives, mandates and activities of staff unions and staff associations as they relate to the effective management of the organizations of the United Nations system. It will test a number of working hypotheses that have arisen from its preliminary investigations: firstly, that management appears to give the staff unions extravagant perquisites and yields to them on virtually all unimportant, non-policy matters while simultaneously freezing them out of any meaningful participation in decision-making and, secondly, that improved staff-management relations have the potential to improve the functioning of the organizations of the United Nations system.

B. Reports on operational activities for development

11 and 12. United Nations system development cooperation in science and technology:
Part one: Africa;
Part two: Asia and the Pacific;
Part three: Latin America and the Caribbean
(scheduled for the 1995 work programme)

12. Since the adoption in 1979 of the United Nations Vienna Programme of Action for Science and Technology for Development, this subject has become a prominent feature of the legislative directives and the substantive and operational programmes of organizations within the United Nations system. In line with relevant resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Committee for Programme and Coordination, these reports seek to evaluate, on the basis of selected projects, the effective contribution of the United Nations system in supporting indigenous capacity-building in science and technology. The evaluation findings will be contained in three

separate reports covering Africa, Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean. UNDP requested this evaluation.

13. National execution of projects

13. The Governing Council (now the Executive Board) of UNDP has emphasized that government execution (now broadened to national execution) and management of projects should be "the ultimate modality" of all UNDP-supported projects. This modality has been studied but there remains a need for greater understanding of this important method of carrying out projects, including the role of the specialized agencies of the United Nations in contributing to and enhancing this form of execution, the organizations' support to Governments, and Governments' own acceptance of this modality at the operational level. This review was requested by FAO.

14. Review and assessment of efforts to restructure the regional dimension of United Nations economic and social activities

14. General Assembly resolution 32/197 of 20 December 1977, usually known as the "restructuring resolution", set out new leadership and operational roles for the regional commissions, but it was implemented only to a minimal extent. The role of regional commissions in team leadership and coordination has been more ancillary than leading. This report will analyse the experience of past and present restructuring efforts and will suggest ways to strengthen regional commissions effectively to enable them to respond better to the needs of their respective regions and the economic and social agenda of the United Nations for the 1990s.

15. Relationship between the funding agencies of the United Nations system and the United Nations Secretariat, particularly the regional commissions

15. The report would focus particularly on the relationship between UNFPA and the regional commissions and the situations which has arisen as a result of the creation of technical support teams by UNFPA. The object of the report would be to analyse the programme of activities carried out in past years by the regional commissions in the field of population with UNFPA-funding, the new arrangements that have been established by UNFPA in the different geographical regions, and possible duplication of functions. The report would make recommendations on what institutional arrangements could be made to ensure that the interests of member Governments are best served in the field of population and development.

C. Report on peace-keeping

16. Sharing peace-keeping responsibilities: the United Nations and regional organizations

16. On 28 January 1993, the Security Council invited regional arrangements and organizations to study, on a priority basis, ways and means to strengthen their functions to maintain international peace and security within their areas of competence as well as those to further improve coordination with the United Nations (S/25184). In its resolution 48/42 of 10 December 1993 on a comprehensive review of the whole question of peace-keeping operations in all their aspects, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General, in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter, to consider ways to provide advice and assistance, in a variety of forms such as advisory services, seminars and conferences, to regional organizations and arrangements in their respective areas of competence, to enhance their capacity to cooperate with the United Nations in the field of peace-keeping operations. Bearing in mind the above concerns of the Member States, the report intends to identify specific and cost-effective ways to assist regional organizations in their efforts to enhance their capacity to maintain peace and security, in particular in the field of peace-keeping. The report will also seek to ascertain measures to be taken by the United Nations in order to improve coordination with regional organizations.

D. Report on humanitarian assistance

17. Involvement of the United Nations system in providing and coordinating humanitarian assistance

17. Over the last few years, the United Nations system has been increasingly involved in humanitarian assistance and emergency relief, in both natural and man-made disasters, and especially in connection with peace-keeping operations. Many of these efforts have sprung up in an urgent response to circumstances and without time to determine appropriate frameworks objectively. Some measures of coordination have been developed and could possibly be extended and adjusted to meet changing circumstances, including consideration of the need for preventive action. The report will be a critical policy and organizational assessment of the planning framework and approaches used by various parts of the United Nations system in providing, distributing and coordinating humanitarian assistance. The main purpose will be to establish a system of coordination and operation which, within the existing level of institutional management capacity, would lead to better planning and operational management by the United Nations system as a whole, with the result that scarce human and material resources are utilized more appropriately in the provision and coordination of humanitarian assistance.

III. PRELIMINARY WORK PROGRAMME FOR 1995 AND BEYOND

18. As indicated in its previous annual reports, JIU has been working to develop "a more comprehensive work-programming framework and strategy". 1/ Although the Unit will continue to be responsive to problems of urgency which arise during the course of the year, it believes it important to indicate the longer-range direction of its work programme. by so doing, it will not only give greater coherence to the annual work programme, but should also encourage helpful feedback from Member States and participating organizations.

19. There are four principal and interrelated areas of concentration envisaged for the JIU work programme for 1995 and beyond: management, budgetary, administrative issues, operational activities for development, peace-keeping and humanitarian assistance. The following are indications of subjects of inspection, investigation and evaluation where the Unit intends to pursue its work in 1995 and beyond. Most of these subjects are requests from the legislative organs and the secretariats of the participating organizations, whereas others are generated internally.

A. Management, budgetary and administrative issues

1. A system-wide comparative view of methods of geographical distribution calculation (proposed by UNESCO);

2. Inspection of the Economic Commission for Europe (generated internally);

3. Inspection of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (generated internally);

4. Number, size and cost of conferences, seminars, workshops and other meetings and gatherings in the technical cooperation programmes of the United Nations specialized agencies (proposed by UNDP);

5. Impact of UNDP's new support cost arrangements (proposed by FAO and the United Nations).

B. Operational activities for development

6. Contributions of the United Nations system to the economic, social and political advancement of women: an assessment of progress and prospects (generated internally);

7. United Nations system development cooperation in science and technology: Part three (Latin America and the Caribbean).

C. Peace-keeping

8. Problems of the start-up phase of peace-keeping operations (General Assembly resolution 48/221);

9. Staffing of the military component of peace-keeping operations, including rotation of troops contingents (generated internally);

10. Methodology for establishing and presentation of peace-keeping budgets (generated internally);

11. Peace-keeping operations: budgeting, procurement and management of vehicles (generated internally).

D. Humanitarian assistance

12. Investigation of the relationship between humanitarian assistance and peace-keeping operations (proposed by UNICEF).

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 34 (A/46/34), para. 23.